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# Welkom to become SA Silicon Valley?

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A project to build a R3-billion electronics manufacturing hub is likely to get underway in the economically depressed area of Matjhabeng (Welkom) in the Free State.

Although details remain sketchy, the Free State government is believed to have approved the project concept that will see the National Association of Manufacturers in Electronic Components as the first group to occupy the new site.

They will be known as ICT City and, as part of the project, the bulk infrastructure that will service the new site will be upgraded. The land being used for the development will be rented from the Free State government.

According to Mpho Mphake, an adviser to Mxolisi Dukwana, the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, the provincial and national governments had decided to invest in the ICT project as part of a plan to uplift the provincial economy after about 80,000 people, mainly miners, lost their jobs in the province.

Mphake says that many households have been unable to pay for municipal services because they are unemployed and this has resulted in the bulk infrastructure services deteriorating.

Statistic South Africa says that about 28% of the province's workforce is currently unemployed.

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